



Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ART MUSEUM, BRISBANE
11 SEPTEMBER-28 NOVEMBER 2010

UQ
ART MUSEUM



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

100
YEARS AHEAD

Cover:

Left: Aurukun dancers performing at the opening ceremony of Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, 2009. Photo David Campbell, courtesy of Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Right: Arthur Pambejan Jr 1936- Clan: Winchanam *Untitled VII (Walkan-aw and Kalben designs)* 2007

Ochres and charcoal with synthetic polymer binder on linen 91.0 x 102.0 cm Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2008 Photo: Mick Richards



This project has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. The accompanying publication has been supported by the Queensland Government, Australia through Trade Queensland's Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency (QIAMEA). QIAMEA promotes Queensland's Indigenous arts industry through marketing and export activity throughout Australia and internationally. Supported by the Aurukun Community Development Fund, a partnership funded by CHALCO and the Queensland and Australian Governments.

UQ
ART MUSEUM

The University of Queensland
University Drive, St Lucia, Qld 4072
Open daily 10.00 am – 4.00 pm
www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au

ABOUT THIS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

This Interpretive Guide is intended for use in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition *Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art*. The Guide may be used by visitors prior to, during or following a visit to this exhibition. Alternatively, this online resource may be used for independent eLearning experiences, along with the video, to provide content and direction for a case study on Aurukun Aboriginal art for tertiary students, senior high school students and teachers.

This free resource aims to enhance audience understanding of the exhibition and interpretation of the relationships between visual traditions of the past and contemporary art from the Wik and Kugu Aboriginal people of Aurukun in far north Queensland. As exhibition curator Dr Sally Butler writes:

"Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art presents art work from the Wik and Kugu Aboriginal people of the Aurukun region in western Cape York peninsula. The exhibition aims to create a visual understanding of how ancient cultural traditions are reinvented through innovative contemporary art. It traces the deep sense of continuity with the past within new artistic expressions that seek relevance with contemporary life".

The information and focus questions in the Guide are intended to support the inquiry learning model of the Queensland Visual Art senior curriculum and align with the general objectives of *making* and *appraising*. The guide provides opportunities for Year 11 and 12 senior students to:

- extend their **knowledge** and **experience** of contemporary visual arts practice and career paths;
- develop their capacity to **research, develop, resolve** and **reflect** on their own and others' art works in the specific context of audiences and purposes; and
- explore how the visual arts reinforce and challenge their own individual experiences.

The focus questions were developed with advice and input from Cindy Hales, from the Department of Education and Training, to help support understanding of, and respect for the stories, languages, beliefs and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples. This approach reflects the aims of Education Queensland to embed Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum and recognises that in the senior phase learners gain an awareness of the contributions of Indigenous Australians at local, regional, national and global levels. This helps senior students develop a greater understanding of their own country of origin and of the cultural, social and political beliefs that influence Australian identity and society.

My Land, My Tracks: A framework for the holistic approach to Indigenous Studies, developed by Dr Ernie Grant is reproduced in this Guide, with permission from Education Queensland, to support learning about Indigenous knowledges, within an educational context. In keeping with this holistic approach to Indigenous education, suggested activities for the early and middle phases of Queensland schooling, to be undertaken during a visit to the exhibition *Before Time Today, Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art*, are included at the end of this Guide.

The Interpretive Guide for the exhibition *Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art* also reflects The University of Queensland's policy on *Education Principles on Indigenous Australian Matters*, and the policy principle that as "an institution involved in teaching, learning and research we seek to further the understanding, both amongst students and the wider community, of traditional cultures and values and the history of Australia's original inhabitants".

Gillian Ridsdale
Curator Public Programs,
UQ Art Museum

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY WARNING

Persons using this Interpretive Guide are warned that there may be words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive. Some of the artists who created the works of art illustrated in this Guide have since passed away.

The Australia Council for the Arts has articulated nine protocols relating to the production of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material with consideration given to secrecy and confidentiality, communication, consultation and consent,

and attribution and copyright.

www.australiacouncil.gov.au

Users of this resource should be aware that in some Indigenous communities, hearing or seeing the names of deceased persons might cause sadness or distress, particularly to the relatives of these people. Certain totemic symbols may also have prohibitions about the age, initiation and ceremonial status or clan of the person who may see them.

ABOUT THIS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM:

My Land My Tracks: A framework for the holistic approach to Indigenous studies assists with embedding Indigenous perspectives in the Queensland curriculum. This framework was developed by Dr Ernie Grant, Djirrabal/Djirrabal Elder and state-wide cultural Research Officer, and is published by the FNQ Indigenous Schooling Support Unit, Education Queensland www.issu.com.au

Please click on this link for the full version of *My Land My Tracks: A framework for the holistic approach to Indigenous studies* <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/educators/cultural-aware-localstory.html>

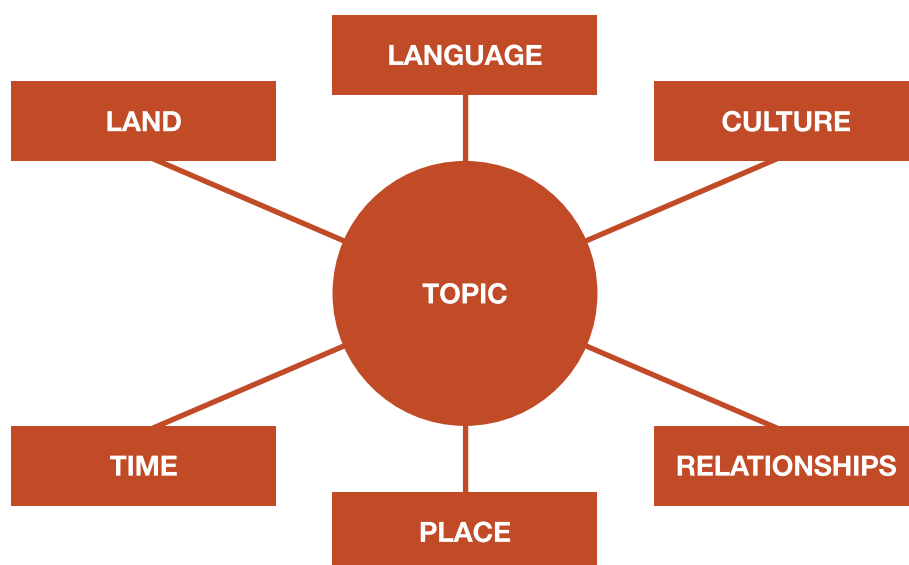
According to Dr Grant “Indigenous communities have a holistic view of the world which incorporates the vital link between Land, Language and Culture”. The framework uses this holistic approach and can be a useful strategy for teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous subject matter.

Dr Grant writes:

“Indigenous culture reflects an oral as opposed to a written tradition; it relies largely on observation; it is closely aligned with nature and the environment – with particular emphasis on cycles, patterns and the effect each has on the other; and of course it is based on an undeniable link between Land, Language and Culture.”

When discussing or writing about Indigenous artists, as protocol, information about where the artist is from, who their people are and often the language group they belong to, is provided, where possible. This acknowledges the importance of this information and that it should be considered part of a holistic approach to discussing the work of artists.

Dr Grant’s framework uses the three elements of Land, Language and Culture and contextualises them into the domains of Time, Place, and Relationships. Linking these six components together can provide a flexible framework for organising and presenting on a range of topics, including contemporary Indigenous art and artists.



PROTOCOLS

Protocols outline the roles and relationships expected of teachers and students working with Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledges, within an educational context.

For more information please see www.qsa.qld.edu.au/3035.html

ABOUT AURUKUN



Aurukun dancers performing at the opening ceremony of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, 2009
Photo David Campbell, courtesy of Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Aurukun is an Aboriginal community in the far north west of Queensland on the Cape York Peninsula. The Shire of Aurukun covers an area of 7,500 square kilometres.

The various nations of the Western Cape, based around Aurukun, are collectively referred to as the Wik and Kugu peoples. There are five different clans groups within this area. They are the Sara, Winchanam, Apelech, Puch and Wanam. Each clan group is defined by distinct language and kinship relationships and cultural practices.

The Wik and Kugu peoples' lives and spirituality are inextricably linked to the land. The Indigenous peoples of the Cape maintain a diversity of living cultures and have a strong and continuing attachment to the land and the waters throughout

their country. The Wik and Kugu people have culturally specific associations with the landscape, which are based on each clan's own distinct traditions and laws.

These cultural associations with their country may include or relate to cultural practices, knowledge, songs, stories, art, paths, landforms, flora, fauna and minerals. These associations include custodial relationships with particular landscapes. It is these very relationships that determine who can speak for particular nations.

For more information on the Aurukun community see:
http://aurukun.harryscollar.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Peter Sutton

"The Wik peoples of western Cape York Peninsula became widely known in Australia in the 1990s because of their historic native title claim, but they have also become renowned for their unique sculptural tradition. Ritual sculpture has been recorded and collected from Aboriginal people in western Cape York Peninsula since the early twentieth century.

Typically, the carvings are of characters in religious legends, legends specific to the clan countries of those who make and dance with them. They include heroic humans such as the *Pungk Apelech brothers*, and totemic animals such as Echidna, Dingo, Estuarine Shark or Saltwater Crocodile. They are part of performances in which dance movements and song words go together with specific carvings, re-enacting ancient legendary events at known, specific sites".



ABOUT AURUKUN



Photo: Carl Warner

Stanley Kalkeeyorta

"The five clans are based on the human senses. There's Wanam, Apelech, Winchanam, Puch and Sara. So they are the seeing, hearing, feeling, smell, taste. Each clan, we looked after each other when we were out in country. We still look after each other. So if there's a bush fire near my country then someone from the fire end might see it and they'll send a messenger over to our country. And then if there's a fire burning near your country, you have a look out for others. You might go to a swamp in another man's country and these tribes will say that's bad water and you can't drink it. So it's looking out for each other in various ways. It's the taste, the smell, the hearing. This hand (holds up hand with fingers spread apart) represents the five clans and that we look out for each other.

Some people think there's two various ways, one traditional and one the urban way, but it points in the same direction. The art we make today is the same as the past. It's like the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Bible, the old way and the new way, both going in the same direction.

But most of all we have to remember we are the ones, the actual land owners, the real people. We don't belong to the land, the land owns us. When we die the land will claim our body. See, we just look after the land for the next generation to come. That's why I try to tell these pupils of mine to make carvings from the land, make paintings to maintain the culture of the Indigenous person. So the identity might not be lost. The language and the paint that we wear and the song that we sing, it is the identity of that tribe".

Stanley Kalkeeyorta is an artist and cultural advisor from Aurukun. Since 2007 he has worked with Wik media as senior advisor, script writer, translator and presenter for numerous video productions. He is the presenter of the *Bush food: End of the wet* television documentary (still airing on NITV, 2010). Stanley also presented cultural awareness productions for the Aurukun Bauxite project in 2008 and 2009.



Wesley Ampebeygan 1968- Clan: Apelech
Apelech brothers, 2009
ochres and charcoal with synthetic polymer on milkwood, feathers, beeswax and grass
2 parts: 87.0 x 21.0 x 29.0 cm; 85.0 x 21.0 x 28.0 cm Private collection
Photo: Mick Richards

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Researching

Research the historical context of the Wik native title claim. What does native title mean to you and your understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Explore Indigenous stereotypes and cultural mis-representations or myths.

Responding

For Stanley Kalkeeyorta "The art we make today is the same as the past. It's like the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Bible, the old way and the new way, both going in the same direction". What do you think he means by this statement?

Reflecting

Consider the representations of sacredness and transition in Aurukun art, dance and song. Discuss the contribution this culture and knowledge makes to our contemporary national identity and creativity.

EARLY COLLECTING AND COLLECTIONS



Left:
Unknown artist
Cripple man c.1958
Ochres on milkwood
120.0 x 28.5 x 18.5 cm
Collection of
The University of Queensland
Anthropology Museum
Photo: Carl Warner

Right:
Unknown artist
KangKang (Eagle) 1958
Ochres on wood
74.0 x 134.0 x 50.0 cm
Collection of
The University of Queensland
Anthropology Museum
Photo: Carl Warner

The sculptures featured in *Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art* are one part of the collection from Aurukun held in the Anthropology Museum at The University of Queensland, currently numbering just over 250 things and still growing. These range from bags and spears collected in the 1930s to photographs to contemporary weaving and textiles. The Museum is fortunate to be the custodian of this remarkable collection.

The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum was founded in 1948. Under its first curator, Dr L.P. Winterbotham, the Museum grew from a flurry of letter-writing: missionaries, government officials and medical officers working in remote regions of Australia were asked to collect and document artefacts made and used by Aboriginal Australians. The sculptures in this exhibition were collected by two missionaries, Reverend J.B. McCarthy and Reverend William MacKenzie.

Reverend McCarthy was briefly based at the Aurukun Mission in 1943 and in 1949, collecting some 60 items during his stay. He noted that a number of these had been used in an initiation

ceremony, thoughtfully nailing this information on to some of the sculptures.

Reverend MacKenzie had a much longer time period at Aurukun, presiding over the Mission between 1923 and 1965. His donations of sculptures were accompanied by information about the ceremonies for which they were created as well as stories of the figures represented. The most prominent of his donations was a collection of some 15 sculptures associated with an "Arplitch" (now spelled Apelech) ceremony performed in honour of Sir Henry Abel Smith's visit to Aurukun in September 1958.

Many early collectors of Aboriginal cultural material subscribed to conservative notions of pre-contact technology, design and culture to privilege a very specific idea of "authenticity". These sculptures as a collection show that this idea was not universal, the use of steel tools, nails, glass and tin was not questioned. Innovation was celebrated, as Reverend McCarthy commented on one of the fish, "the fins are quite up to date".

Jane Willcock
Museum Collection Administrator
UQ Anthropology Museum



Left: Unknown artist *Fish* c.1954 Ochres on wood and tin 4 parts: 58.0 x 17.0 x 9.0 cm; 61.0 x 19.5 x 9.0cm; 62.5 x 80.0 x 90.0 cm; 59.0 x 19.0 x 9.0 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum Photo: Carl Warner

Right: Unknown artist *Female dingo* c.1955 Ochres and resin on wood and glass 36.0 x 103.0 x 20.0 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum Photo: Carl Warner

REINVENTING TRADITION



Far left:
Horace Wikmunea 1963-
Clan: Winchanam, Apelech
Two Ngum (Divers), 2008
natural ochres with synthetic
polymer binder on milkwood
59.0 x 33.0 x 39.0 cm
Collection of The University of
Queensland, purchased 2008
Photo: Mick Richards

Left top:
Garry Namponan 1960-
Clan: Apelech
Ku' (Camp dog), 2008
natural ochres with synthetic
polymer binder on milkwood
46.0 x 76.0 x 18.0 cm
Collection of The University of
Queensland, purchased 2008
Photo: Mick Richards

Left bottom:
Leigh Namponan 1965-
Clan: Apelech
Pengiky (Freshwater shark), 2009
natural ochres and synthetic
polymer binder on milkwood
55.0 x 105.0 x 49.0 cm
Collection of The University of
Queensland, purchased 2010
Photo: Mick Richards

Sally Butler

"Reinventing visual traditions in Aurukun art encourages new ways of thinking about Aboriginal culture in, or perhaps as, a process of change. Colonisation made most traditional practices impossible and necessitated radical transformations in almost all aspects of life: to the point that Aboriginality today arguably defines itself as a culture of change. Change is survival.

Aurukun carving has an exceptionally interesting history of tradition and change. Sutton and earlier anthropologists noted that Aurukun figures were produced originally in moulded clay. Figures were often painted and carried in ceremonial performances that acted out the mythological activities of ancestors. The medium of clay gave way to carved timber with the arrival of metal tools, particularly after the Aurukun Mission introduced carpentry lessons and equipment. But the aesthetics of smooth moulded clay forms remained intact within this transfer to wood. Aurukun carvings from the mid-twentieth century in the National Museum of Australia and The University of Queensland Anthropology collections are distinctive for the eloquent characterisation in their sculpted forms. The sculptures give the impression of being characters from a particular story; they are never just types or motifs of fish, birds, men or women. Aboriginal visual culture was always embedded in mythological stories, but Aurukun carvings have an emphatic narrative quality, even within this context".

Peter Sutton

"Traditional Wik thought is profoundly human-centred. This may sound strange, especially when said of their recent ancestors, whose lives were so minutely attuned to the physicalities of the bush on which they formerly lived and depended daily for very life. But it is made plain in a number of different ways.

One such way is the constant placing of human relationships above so much that has been thought by others, since colonial times, to have deserved greater attention. Health, peace, economic sufficiency, ownership of labour-saving devices, comfort, privacy, schooling and work, while they have their places, are frequently suborned in Wik practice to the greater values of belonging, of valued status as a relative, of the emotional comforts of dependency and of power, of showing unquestioning kin loyalty in times of trouble, of drinking to enter emotion.

In the deep past the sculptures used by Wik people in their sacred ceremonies were available to be seen by initiated men, and in some cases by women and children as well. Either way, the men presented the *maayn* as transformations of the story beings themselves. In time this changed, as the human makers showed their craft openly and no men-only category of sculpture, or of ongoing ceremony, survived in Wik ritual life. Secularised sculptures went on the market. Even carvings still considered a little spiritually dangerous were released to the wider world. The carving men of Aurukun, once performers and warriors, were now also becoming artists who made their works in the shire council's arts centre, wearing blue Aurukun Council overalls".

REINVENTING TRADITION



Above:
Craig Koomeeta 1977-
Clan: Apelech
Large crocodile, 2002
aluminium, edition 4/12
26.5 x 134.0 x 25.5 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland,
purchased 2010
Photo: courtesy of Urban Art Projects

Left:
Craig Koomeeta 1977-
Clan: Apelech
Dingo, 2002
bronze, edition 5/12
40.0 x 61.0 x 14.0 cm
Private collection
Photo: courtesy Urban Art Projects

Sally Butler

“Aurukun carving also extended the vocabulary of authentic creativity with the development of sculptures being cast in bronze and aluminium. In 2002, nine Aurukun carvers participated in a project titled *Old way – New way* in collaboration with Brisbane-based Urban Art Projects (UAP) to produce a series of carvings that were to be cast in bronze and aluminium by UAP. The essentially modern aesthetics of aluminium was particularly effective in conveying the sense of ‘reinvented’ carving traditions. Craig Koomeeta, one of Aurukun’s younger and most recognised artists, was a leading figure in this project and produced several stunning sculptures, including a crocodile in which the hard-edge finish of the metallic medium enhances the deep incisions in the scaled form of the reptile’s back. The metal finish makes the abstract design element of this natural feature obvious and suggests how abstraction and figurative art have an ambiguous distinction in Indigenous art”.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Researching

Carefully re-read the passages by Sally Butler and Peter Sutton. Research the history of Aurukun carving and compile a list of the diverse media and techniques used, including the work in the collection of The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum.

Developing

Consider creating a three-dimensional sculpture of an animal which personifies a strong human emotion or human characteristic. Be innovative in the way you might embellish your animal, and surprise audiences with the way you elaborate expressive qualities in unexpected materials. Give your animal a name and back-story (where it lives, who owns it, what it likes to eat, how it spends its day) that helps us to believe this animal has its own distinct personality and life.

Reflecting

Discuss your experience of viewing this exhibition with your friends. Do you think contemporary cultural knowledge is required to understand the meaning of Aurukun works of art? Why?

PAINTING



Top left:
Arthur Pambejan Jr 1936- Clan: Winchanam
Untitled VII (Walkan-aw and Kalben designs), 2007
ochres and charcoal with synthetic polymer binder on linen 91.0 x 102.0 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2008 Photo: Mick Richards

Top right:
Arthur Pambejan 1936- Clan: Winchanam
Alair Pambejan 1968- Clan: Apelech, Winchanam
Kalben (A bonefish story place) and Walkan-aw (A sacred site in the flying-fox story), 2008–2009
ochres and charcoal with synthetic polymer binder on milkwood, bush rope, and bush string
193.0 x 512.0 x 23.0 cm installed Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2009
Photo: Mick Richards

Left:
Arthur Pambejan Jr dancing at Queensland Art Gallery for the opening performance at
Story Place: Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rainforest exhibition, July 2003.
Photo: Andrew Baker

Sally Butler

“Canvas painting is a relatively recent art form in Aurukun but it is perhaps the art form that now carries the essence of the Wik aesthetic. Since 2004 a number of male artists have been producing canvas paintings based on traditional body painting designs. The most significant of these series are the art works by Arthur Pambejan Jr and are based on the Walkan-aw and Kalben designs. Produced in traditional ochres and acrylic paint, the entire series is a symphony of red, white and black, laid down in the striking linear and geometric patterning of decorative designs seen more commonly on his sculpture. Indeed, one painting that includes a rare figurative element shows two bonefish, with these designs placed above vertical stripes of these three colours.

Strict rules once applied to body painting designs in the era of Wik ceremonies. Different markings in a myriad of combinations were designated for different parts of the body such as the face, torso, upper arms and legs, and lower arms and legs. The graphic elements of these designs consisted mainly of dots, lines and bold geometric shapes painted in red and white ochre onto the skin. When transferred from body to canvas, the designs become visual essays in organisation, order, and maintaining balance in shifting relationships. The colour relationships and repetitive graphic elements are abstract expressions of the fundamentals of social organisation in Wik life”.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Reflecting

Consider the use of linear and geometric elements in recent Aurukun canvas paintings. Devise a list of questions you would like to ask Aurukun senior custodians about the transference of traditional body designs to canvas.

Developing

Create a work of art that transmits your identity and cultural connectivity to a place that you call home. Think about what you need to utilise to communicate your story and relationship to your special place.

Resolving

Consider the most appropriate environment for your work to be viewed to convey your connection to a place, or how you choose to identify yourself. What else does this say about you?

WEAVING



Left: Mavis Ngallametta, on right, collecting pandanus leaf at Aurukun Centre: rolling cabbage palm fibre for dilly bags Right: making pandanus leaf baskets
Photos: Kerry Trapnell © Kerry Trapnell

Mavis Ngallametta

"When I was a child I used to be in the dormitories at six in the afternoon then got up in the morning; six in the morning it was 'out'. I taught in the school when I was fourteen, fifteen. Then after school myself and my school mates used to weave out of Pandanus, making fruit bowls and mats. I was making these but I used to see my mum and my aunty making a dilly bag out of Cabbage Palm and they used to make mats and fishing nets differently. Our old parents, old people didn't do it like that. There's a special string they used to go out and collect in the bush. When we worked together, we used to roll it in our laps. I still do sometimes. I roll strings in my lap and make part of a rope, like for grass skirts, the waist part".

Mavis Ngallametta is an artist and traditional elder of country surrounding the Kendle River region near Aurukun. Mavis

was granted the Community Arts Achievement Award in 2004 for her contribution to the school and the community, teaching the children traditional crafts.



Mavis Ngallametta Photo: Carl Warner

She also worked as a host for the Aurukun Wetlands Charters and is currently the president of the Wik and Kugu Art Centre committee. Her weavings and canvas paintings are held in major and private Australian and international art collections. Mavis speaks English, Wik Mungkan and Wik Ngatan. She also speaks Kugu which is her traditional language.



Above:
Rita Wikmunea
Basket, 2005
Pandanus leaf with natural dyes
5.0 cm x 25.5 x 25.5 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2006
Photo: Mick Richards

Right:
Annie Kalkeeyorta
Dilly bag (Waangk waangkam), c.1974
cabbage palm fibre and plant root dye
30.0 x 30.0 cm
Courtesy of Professor David Trigger
Photo: Carl Warner



WEAVING



Top left: discarded fishing nets ready for use in weaving ghost net baskets at Wik and Kugu Art Centre, Aurukun 2010

Bottom left: Mavis Ngallametta weaving discarded fishing net into ghost net basket, Aurukun 2010

Photos: Carl Warner

Left:

Mavis Ngallametta 1944-

Clan: Apelech

Ik (Basket), 2010

synthetic fishing net, raffia and rope
38.0 x 48.0 x 48.0 cm

Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2010

Photo: Mick Richards

Mavis Ngallametta

"I used to make dilly bags out of Cabbage Palm and now I'm weaving out of ghost net, which is good for me. And now people can see how it's amazing for me to weave from a net, a fishing net. It's very hard to make these ones. I have to think a lot like and everyone is now asking me to make bowls and basket".

Stanley Kalkeeyorta

"It's like with a ghost net. A ghost net is waste. It's a danger for sea creatures and things. So it has powers to trap and kill. A human made it for that purpose, so what we try to do is take away that 'killingness' to transfer it to here, (points to ghost net woven basket) which is then for something to eat in a good way. From a bad thing it's transferring into a good thing. See, it's part of culture. You can have bad culture, good culture. No more ghost net; instead, you have a bag full of apples, oranges or yams. Nets are good but don't leave it there in the sea, because if you leave it there and fish get killed then that's when the good people come, the environment people. They pick up this waste and we make them into good. It's the ladies that make them good. Everything has power, they have power, the nets have power to kill. But then we draw that out and make it into this, and from the fishing net it becomes a food bowl".

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Researching

Research examples of Aboriginal traditional weaving techniques from Queensland and other states and document the variety of weaving and knotting techniques used.

Developing

Explore the varying qualities of fibres, and contrast fibre qualities as you experiment. Generate ideas that will result in the creation of a unique fibre based response to a traditionally non-fibre object.

Reflecting

Think about the underlying cultural protocols in relation to reproducing and exhibiting your fibre work. Is this important to you? Why?

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM

PREP-YEAR 9

ACTIVITIES Prep-Year 5

"The **early years** of education, from Prep to Year 5, are a particularly important time for children to build strong foundations in learning and relationships with others. In the early years, children learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They engage with a variety of stories, languages, beliefs and cultural practices of Australia's Indigenous peoples".

www.qsa.qld.edu.au/577.html

Talking

Aurukun artists make sculptures to tell a range of stories. Sometimes the sculptures are used with dance and song to tell the story. What kind of story do you think each artist was trying to tell with each sculpture?

Looking

How would you describe the paint that is used on the sculptures? Do you think the surface of the sculptures is rough or smooth? What feeling do you get from animals like the diver birds, the camp dog and the saltwater shark?

Making

Make your own sculpture from clay or plasticine. Will it have fur, scales or spikes? What story will you tell about your sculpture?

ACTIVITIES Year 6-Year 9

"In the **middle phase** of schooling, from Years 6-9, students develop an understanding of the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and how these are influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and knowledge. This understanding helps students gain a better appreciation of Australian history and contemporary issues".

www.qsa.qld.edu.au/577.html

Talking

Although they are based on traditional stories, these sculptures are made by contemporary Wik artists, many of whom are men. Why is it important for Aboriginal artists to maintain traditional knowledge and practice?

Looking

When you look at the sculptures do they convey a meaning or feeling to you? How does the smooth sculpted surface and the painted patterns personify the character of each of the animals?

Making

Design an animal that has heroic powers. Construct your heroic animal in plasticine (you may need to embed a wire armature so that they can bend and move). Use stop-motion animation to communicate your animal and their powers. Share the story of your animal's heroic powers.

FURTHER READING

Adams, Jeanie. *Crafts of Aboriginal far north Queensland: The Yalga-Binbi collection*. Cairns: Yalga-Binbi Institute for Community Development Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, 1995.

Bartlett, Judith. 'Australian anthropology', in *Cultural exhibition of Queensland*, edited by J. Bartlett and M. Whitmore. Saitama (Japan): Saitama Prefectural Museum, 1989, 13–70.

Butler, Sally. ed. *Before Time Today, Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art*. UQP: St Lucia, Queensland, 2010.

Cole, Eliza. *The woven purpose*. Exhibition catalogue. Brisbane: CQ gallery, 2005.

Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi. *Puulway Wik and Kugu Totems. Contemporary Sculpture from Aurukun*. Exhibition catalogue. Melbourne: Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, 2007.

Lindholm, Charles. *Culture and authenticity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

MacKenzie, Geraldine. *Aurukun diary. Forty years with the Aborigines*. Melbourne: The Aldersgate Press, 1981.

McConnel, Ursula H. 'Native arts and industries on the Archer, Kendall and Holroyd Rivers, Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland'. *Records of the South Australian Museum* 11(1953):1–42.

Mutch, T.D. *The first discovery of Australia with an account of the voyage of the 'Duyfken' and the career of Captain Willem Jans*, in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. XXVIII, Part V, Sydney. Accessible in digital format through * A Project Gutenberg of Australia eBook * eBook No. 0600631h. html (eBook produced by Colin Choat and Bob Forsyth), 1942.

National Gallery of Australia. *Contemporary Australian Aboriginal art in modern worlds*. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2000.

O'Gorman, A. *A guide to the collection of Aurukun sculptures in the National Museum of Australia*, 1990.

Queensland Art Gallery. *Story place: Indigenous art of Cape York and the rainforest*. Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2003.

Sutton, Peter. *The politics of suffering: Indigenous Australia and the end of the liberal consensus*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009.

_____. 'Leigh Nampanon', in *Menagerie: Contemporary Indigenous sculpture in Australia*. Exhibition catalogue. Surry Hills, NSW: Australian Centre for Craft and Design, 2008.

_____. *Dreamings: The art of Aboriginal Australia*. Ringwood: Penguin Books Australia, 1988.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writers: Gillian Ridsdale and Cindy Hales

Exhibition Curator: Dr Sally Butler

Publication Coordinator: Gillian Ridsdale

The quoted extracts in this Interpretive Guide by Peter Sutton, Sally Butler, Stanley Kalkeeyorta and Mavis Ngallametta are taken from the publication *Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art*.

Unless otherwise stated all images of art works are reproduced courtesy of the artists, the Wik and Kugu Art Centre, Aurukun and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane.

Published by The University of Queensland Art Museum, September 2010

© 2010 The University of Queensland, the authors and the artists

The publisher grants permission for the information and materials in this Interpretive Guide to be reproduced strictly for teaching and learning purposes, to support the exhibition *Before Time Today: Reinventing Tradition in Aurukun Aboriginal Art* at The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane from 11 September to 28 November 2010.

CRICOS Provider Number 00025B